"In a Lonely Land"

Hilah Seward Industrial Home

Mrs. William F. Baldwin

Woman's Home Missionary Society
Methodist Episcopal Church
150 Fifth Avenue, New York City

Each, 2c.; per dozen, 20c.

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"Let us probe the silent places, let us seek what luck betide us,
Let us journey to a lonely land I know.
There's a whisper on the night wind, there's a star agleam to guide us,
And the Wild is calling, calling.....let us go."

TO this land of "silent places" our Home Missionary Society has journeyed to raise the standard of the King among the children of the frozen north. While the wild has called to men of adventure to seek treasures from the rock and earth, the love of God has called to his children to seek the hearts of the inhabitants of the lonely land—the treasure that fadeth not away.

It is hard to realize the immensity of Alaska. It is one-fifth the size of our whole United States, but it is not until one stands alone in a snow-covered waste, amid the vastness and the solitude of an Alaskan winter, that the greatness is borne in upon him.

Will you come with us and view one of these places as we try to tell a little about the work being done in our mission at Sinuk, Alaska?

From New York to Nome, Alaska, is a distance of over five thousand miles and we make the journey by train and steamer.

There is a difference of six hours in the time of New York and Nome, so as your thoughts turn to your Eskimo brothers and sisters, remember they are employed in the afternoon's work as you retire.

Sinuk, or as it is generally known, Sinriock, is a small village about 26 miles north-west of Nome and is on the coast of Bering Sea on the Seward Peninsula. This coast region is a flat, monotonous country, broken by chains of rocky hills. These sometimes rise abruptly from the sea and again, as at Nome and Sinuk, roll back six and eight miles from the coast. You must travel one hundred miles to see any vegetation higher than scrub willow, and even that only grows miles from the coast.

Nature has not lavished beauty upon this portion of the land, but when we "lift up our eyes to the hills," and when on a clear, dark, crisp winter night, we "consider the heavens, the work of His fingers," we feel God lives in every part of His world.

Time is not reckoned by the four seasons, but from the close of navigation to the break-up. The last boat leaves Nome near the end of October and then the inhabitants realize winter is almost upon them for they are shut in by a barrier too great for human hands to break. The long northern winter has begun; the days get shorter and shorter until in December there are four hours of sunlight; and as

far as the eye can see there is nothing but pile upon pile of drifted snow covering Bering Sea, the flat stretch of low land known as the "tundra," and, beyond, the snow-covered mountain peaks.

This is the "lonely land I know."

It was in the summer of 1906 that missionary work was commenced in Sinuk, the workers living in a one-room log cabin. A clear, deep-flowing mountain stream, marking the eastern border of the village and bearing its name, favored the gathering of Eskimos from small villages down the coast toward Nome and from the larger village north, Cape Prince of Wales, and from Nome itself. The population is a varying one, as whole families leave for days and weeks together on hunting and trapping trips.

About two hundred feet from the sea rises a slight bank and upon this the houses stand. The village is built in the shape of a crescent, part of the homes facing the sea, and a part the river. As there are no trees, the natives depend upon drift-wood for building, as well as for fuel. This is washed up in great quantities along the beach, carried out with the ice from the Yukon River. In the winter of 1912 twelve of the fourteen one-room cabins were occupied. Near the center of the village a larger log house is occupied by a white man who runs the road-house or inn, at which travelers stop. Next to this house, nearer the mission home, is the Government school building, in which live the school teacher and family. At the

end of the village farthest from the river stands the Hilah Seward Home. It is quite a pretentious looking building, one story and a half high, painted green with a red roof.

During our three years' stay the population of Sinuk has averaged about eighty men, women and children. The Eskimos have no tribal affection, but the family tie is very strong. Their home life is loving and peaceable, parents thinking much of their children. The families are seldom large, owing to the mortality among the children.

The Eskimo living along the coast around Nome have a constant struggle to make a living. Through the winter months, from December to May, or June, the men go out over the ice to the open water hunting the seal and sea lion. The women fish through the ice for a small fish, called tom-cod. Back toward the mountains sometimes large white rabbits are killed. Squirrel trapping in May keeps them well supplied with meat during those weeks, and gives them the skins so valuable for *parkas*. Fishing is the principal source of supply through the summer. Nets are put out both in the river and sea, while the few seines in the village are in constant use. King salmon, silver salmon, salmon trout, white fish and greyling are the principal fish caught. About every third summer the catch is enormous, but some seasons it is very poor. The fish is dried and occasionally salted for future use. Game—ducks, geese, crane and swan, and

the smaller ptarmigan—are caught through the warmer months, sometimes in abundance.

From these supplies the native spares what he can to take to Nome and sell in exchange for flour, sugar and tea. Their life to us is colorless and almost unbearably monotonous.

A great blessing was in store for the natives when the women of the New Jersey Conference presented the mission with the schooner "New Jersey." The boat is provided with an eight-horsepower gasoline engine, and it is manned wholly by a native crew. By its aid forty-five walrus were caught one spring. As a walrus averages about a ton in weight, you can get some idea of the amount of meat that came into the village. Most of this was buried for winter use. The mission received some of the meat, blubber and ivory. In the summer the men use the boat for some freighting, for which the mission always receives a small recompense.

Regularly three times a week the natives enter with joy "into the house of the Lord" for service. Only severe storms prevent the attendance of every villager from the oldest to the youngest. Through the gift of a friend, whose brother was killed on the Alaskan trails, the mission has been provided with new Gospel song books. The praise service would put to shame some singing in our churches and the pastor needs not to urge

them to public prayer, for often two and three are on their feet at once.

The Industrial Home and Orphanage bears the name of a niece of Secretary Seward, who advised the purchase of Alaska. It was completed in December, 1909. On the first floor there are four living rooms, a laundry, a store-room, a woodshed and a pretty chapel facing the mountains. Upstairs is a central chamber, with one dormitory on each side, for boys and girls.

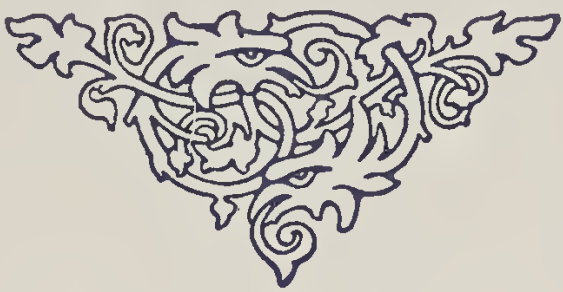
Since its completion there have been enrolled twenty boys and girls. Seven live in the Home permanently, while the rest have been with us only through the school year. The boys help with the outside work and the hard inside work, while the girls learn housekeeping, plain cooking and sewing. They regularly attend the government school and are learning well.

About six miles from the village is located one of the many reindeer camps now in Alaska. The reindeer were first introduced into this country by Dr. Sheldon Jackson and were brought from Siberia. They have proved to be to the natives the great blessing that Dr. Jackson thought they would be. They are the only animals that could thrive in this frozen, barren land. As the Eskimo can live upon what the land and sea provide and are happy in the hard land of their birth, so God provides for these valuable animals. Upon the tundra grows the white moss upon which the reindeer lives.

In the winter when it is covered with snow they use their sharp-hoofed fore-feet to dig up the snow until they reach the moss. The reindeer are scattered in herds through Alaska, and number now about forty thousand.

At Sinuk the mission owns a herd of three hundred and forty-one reindeer. These are cared for by two herders and three apprentices, while the resident missionary at Sinuk is local superintendent of the herd. Each year it is increased by the birth of the fawns in the spring.

In the work in Alaska, as in every other field, God goes before to show the way and Jesus' love is manifested in the purer, nobler lives of His children as they do their best to follow him.



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